PANEL OF CHAIRMEN.

President : Under Rule 3 (1) of the Travancore Legislative Rules, I have to announce that I have nominated Mr. Kochikal P. Balakrishnan Tampi and Mr. K. K. Thomas to the Panel of Chairmen during the current Session of this Council.

RULING OF THE PRESIDENT.

President : Honourable Members will remember that during the last meeting of the Council certain points of order were raised for the decision of the Chair and I had promised to examine them and give my rulings at this Session. One of those points was whether the answering of a starred question by placing a statement on the table was in order and sufficient, as it deprived the members of the opportunity for putting supplementary questions thereon. As I said in the other House the other day, answering an interpellation by laying a statement on the table if such a procedure was unavoidable, even though the interpellation itself did not ask for such a statement, is a well recognised practice in the Legislative Chambers in British India. The House may be aware that on one occasion, the same point specifically came up for consideration in the Indian Legislative Assembly when an honourable member contended that the laying of a statement was not by itself a sufficient answer to a starred question, unless it was read out in the House. It was then ruled by the Chair that the procedure of placing the statement on the table was usual and unobjectionable. I do not find in the Rules or Standing Orders relating to the conduct of business in this House any provision which enables the President to compel the Government member to answer a question in a particular manner. The sufficiency of the answer and the method of answering a question are matters left to the discretion of the answering member, though, I should emphasise that this discretion should be wisely and appropriately used. My ruling therefore is that it is perfectly in order to answer a question by laying a statement on the table, even if the question itself did not specifically ask for such a statement. But, I trust that this procedure will be resorted to as rarely as possible.

I would also take this opportunity to prescribe the procedure to be followed in laying statements on the table. The statements are laid by merely handing them over at the Secretary's table. This is the practice in the Indian Legislative Assembly and elsewhere. Such statements are neither read nor copies thereof circulated among the members. They are incorporated in the printed proceedings of the House for the day and circulated to honourable members in the usual course.

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